



Date: August 13, 2013

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager

Through: W. Bowman Ferguson, Deputy City Manager

From: Rhonda B. Parker, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Beth S. Timson, Assistant Director, Department of Parks and Recreation

Subject: Parks and Recreation Master Plan: Responses to Requests for Additional Information from the Work Session Presentation on August 8, 2013

### **Executive Summary**

At the Work Session on August 8, 2013, staff from the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) presented the proposed new Master Plan to the City Council. Various Council members requested additional information on some topics; responses to those requests follow below.

#### Park Security

Park Rangers as a separate security force (6 rangers, including one Chief Ranger, with arresting authority) were shifted from DPR to the Police Department in 1995. DPR works with the Police Department on crime issues in the parks, with regular meetings with a police liaison.

#### Park Restrooms (Attachment A)

Restrooms are discussed on page 109-110 in the plan. Staff realize that restrooms are an ongoing concern—on the one hand, public restrooms are a critical need, while on the other hand they are extremely vulnerable to misuse. One recommendation in the plan, and one that is in DPR's work plan for 2013-14, is a study of park restrooms that makes specific recommendations for improvements. Attached is a list of existing Durham park restrooms, with some comments, and some URL's that lead to further information.

#### Parks and Proximity (Attachment B)

Measuring what park "proximity" means is not a clear issue for park planners. Does proximity mean literal straight-line distance or accessible distance? Does it mean "close to any park" or "close to a park facility that I want to use"? Does the size of the park that an area is close to make a significant difference? Experience suggests that there are many

distinctions that need to be made. Attached are some pages from a study done by DPR and the NCSU School of Design (group headed by Dr. Perver Baran) that looks at various ways of measuring proximity and accessibility around several City parks. Ultimately, for this proposed Master Plan, staff decided to rely on the PARCS survey responses in the geographic breakdown—if fewer than 50% of the residents in an area were not satisfied with the number of recreational opportunities in their area, then the area was judged to be underserved either by information about existing facilities or by an absence of actual facilities. With that information, staff then looked at census tract numbers to focus in on specific neighborhoods to get some comparables. For instance Census Tract 20.12 is north of I-40 and has a population of 1069 and 496 dwelling units; it contains Piney Wood Park. Census Tract 20.13 is just south of I-40 and has a population of 1281 and 522 dwelling units; it has no park.

#### AfterSchool and Summer Camp (Attachment C)

Attached are more specific survey data on AfterSchool and Summer Camp programs; (1) survey responses from the PARCS survey on the programs in general and (2) specific responses from a selection of camps ongoing this summer).

#### Recycling

Staff acknowledges Council's interest in increasing recycling options at DPR facilities, and will explore all options for providing additional recycling opportunities. DPR does recycle at all of its staffed facilities (recreation centers, Administration Building, Armory, and West Point); and we partner with two neighborhoods to handle recycling in their adopted parks (Forest Hills and Northgate). Two substantial barriers have hindered to expansion of DPR's recycling efforts: (1) unmonitored recycling containers, even those sitting next to trash cans, inevitably get contaminated with non-recyclable materials like food waste, which results in the recyclables not being accepted by recycling processors; and (2) minimal staffing is available for trash and recycling removal from the parks, and more resources would be needed (including a major education and marketing campaign for the public) to place recycling receptacles in all DPR facilities.

#### Park Facility Construction Costs

The proposed Master Plan notes that in order to get up to the average of our NC benchmark communities, we need the following facilities:

- 14 more basketball hoops (that is, 7 courts)
- 23 more tennis courts
- 1 more pool
- 7 more playgrounds
- 5 more full-sized athletic fields

The approximate costs to construct these items—assuming the City already owns the land for them, and that they are being built as new facilities and not renovations—are below. Note that the cost does NOT include associated infrastructure like roads, parking lots,

restrooms, etc. that would be required; and design, permitting, and contingency would add about 17% – 19% to the construction cost. It’s also important to note that a difficult site (e.g., one with poor soils) would cost more because it would require more remediation.

Basketball court, per court	\$70,000
Tennis court, per court	\$90,000
Swimming pool (inside)	\$558 / sq ft
Playground	\$200,000
Athletic field (artificial turf)	\$750,000 - \$1,000,000
Full-service recreation center	\$250 / sq ft

In its most recent purchases of land for a park site, the City paid \$16,000 per acre for 23 acres adjacent to Twin Lakes Park and \$20,000 per acre for 20 acres of land off Coley Rd. in southeastern Durham. The Twin Lakes site was a “bargain sale” by a distressed developer and the Coley Rd. site is currently outside the City limits.

#### Park Maintenance (Attachment D).

As noted in the Master Plan and the subsequent discussions, park maintenance responsibilities are divided between DPR and the General Services Department (GSD). Because of this divided responsibility, accurate costs and needs are not always easy to obtain. Attached is the adopted Park Maintenance Plan of DPR—indicating areas of park care that are handled by DPR, by GSD, or by some other entity.

#### DPR Funding and Staff Levels (Attachment E).

Attached are some tables from the Trust for Public Lands’ 2012 City Park Facts publication. Those tables compare expenditures and staff levels across the nation’s 100 most populous cities, including Durham. While this is useful information in one way, it does NOT account for the expenses of the City parks that are funded through GSD, since those data were not available to the staff responding to the survey information request.

### **Attachments**

- Attachment A: Information on Park Restrooms
- Attachment B: Information on Parks and Population
- Attachment C: Information on AfterSchool and Summer Camp programs
- Attachment D: Park Maintenance Operations Plan
- Attachment E: DPR Funding and Staff Levels